

File Code: 1580
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Mark Lere
Habitat Protection Bureau
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Dear Mark,

I would like to offer the support of the Lolo National Forest for Trout Unlimited's application for a Future Fisheries Improvement Grant to continue restoration work in the Upper Ninemile Mining District. Previously awarded grants to Trout Unlimited were instrumental in planning and implementation efforts for mine reclamation and fisheries improvements in the Ninemile and Sixmile Creek drainages, including Mattie V Creek (2010), St. Louis Creek (2010-2011), Sixmile Creek (2011) and Twin Creek (2012).

The current grant request is for mine reclamation efforts on Sawpit Creek. The overall proposed project area will eventually incorporate approximately 4 miles of the mainstem of upper Ninemile Creek, and several tributary mouths that have been impacted and disconnected from the mainstem due to historic mining (Twin, Martina, and Sawpit Creeks). This project area includes the Housum Placer, a private, three mile long claim with approximately 242 acres of landscape disturbance due to extensive gold mining in the 1930s and 1940s. The mainstem lacks floodplain connectivity, as the valley bottom is dominated by large piles of mining spoils and dredge ponds, and tributaries lack functional connections to the mainstem. This area of Ninemile Creek is a crucial link for hydrologic function and aquatic organism passage, connecting upland forested public land with the grass-dominated valley on private land. We are currently working in partnership with Missoula County and Trout Unlimited to plan, raise funds for, and implement mine reclamation work in upper Ninemile Creek.

The previous grants have funded completion of several projects that will serve as templates for the proposed work, and have resulted in mine waste removal, reconnected tributaries and improved fish passage, increased surface water flow throughout the year, and functional streams and floodplains with native vegetation recovery. These are excellent reclamation projects that compliment both ongoing and successfully completed work in the Ninemile watershed. Funds from the Future Fisheries Improvement Program are essential to completing these on the ground reclamation projects and would help this collaborative group in completing an ambitious watershed scale plan to remediate mining impacts in the area. Therefore, the Forest Service strongly supports this grant application. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


DEBORAH L. R. AUSTIN
Forest Supervisor

cc: Aubree Benson, Chad W Benson

